

# Is There a Checklist of Sins for Christians to Avoid?

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In the Old Testament, God provided a comprehensive list of laws to guide the Israelites in their daily lives. These laws, numbering 613 in total, are recorded primarily in the Torah—the first five books of the Bible (Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy). Among these laws, the Ten Commandments stand out as the core moral code that governed Israelite society ([Exodus 20:1-17](#)). However, the rest of the 603 laws cover a wide array of topics, including ceremonial rituals, dietary restrictions, civil regulations, and guidelines for worship.

## The Purpose of the Old Testament Laws

The vast array of laws in the Old Testament underscores God's profound commitment to holiness and righteousness among His chosen people. These laws were instituted to address humanity's inherent weaknesses and sinful inclinations. As Paul eloquently stated, "Why then was the law given? It was added for the sake of transgressions until the Seed to whom the promise was made would come" ([Galatians 3:19](#)). Furthermore, these laws acted as a "guardian until Christ came, so that we could be justified by faith" ([Galatians 3:24](#)). In essence, the laws served a dual purpose: to illuminate sin and to guide the Israelites along the path of righteousness until the Messiah's arrival.

God's intention was not merely to impose rules but to prepare Israel to live as a holy nation, set apart for His purposes. Israel was to be the family from which the Messiah, the Savior of the world, would come. Therefore, it was crucial that they remain distinct and uncorrupted by the surrounding nations. God desired a pure and holy people, and the laws were a means to that end. As Leviticus 20:26 declares, "You are to be holy to Me because I, the Lord, am holy, and I have set you apart from the nations to be Mine" ([Leviticus 20:26](#)).

The Old Testament laws were also a way to guard the Israelites from falling into idolatry and other abominations that characterized the pagan nations around them. The Messiah could not come from a people dominated by evil but from a godly lineage that sought after God's heart. Even before His birth, God sent John the Baptist to prepare the way, proclaiming, "Prepare the way for the Lord; make His paths straight!" ([Matthew 3:3](#)). The coming of the Lord is always preceded by a call to holiness because God is holy. In stark contrast, the antichrist, who is the embodiment of evil, is preceded by abominations, as prophesied in Daniel: "The desolator will come on the wings of abominations" ([Daniel 9:27](#)).

## The New Testament: A Covenant of Grace, Not Law

With the coming of Jesus Christ, the New Testament introduces a new covenant that fundamentally changes how believers understand sin and righteousness. Rather than providing a checklist of sins, the New Testament emphasizes living according to the "law of the Spirit." The Apostle Paul explains, "For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has set you free from the law of sin and death" ([Romans 8:2](#)). This new covenant is not based on adherence to a specific list of rules but on a relationship with God through Jesus Christ, mediated by the Holy Spirit.

The New Testament makes it clear that this covenant is not about law but about grace. Believers are no longer bound by the Old Testament laws because Christ has fulfilled them all. Jesus said, "Do not think that I have come to abolish the Law or the Prophets; I have not come to abolish them but to fulfill them" ([Matthew 5:17](#)). By His life, death, and resurrection, Jesus met all the righteous requirements of the law on behalf of humanity, setting believers free from its demands. Paul further emphasizes, "For Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to everyone who believes" ([Romans 10:4](#)).

However, this freedom from the law does not imply that Christians are free to live however they please. Paul reminds us, "Shall we sin because we are not under the law but under grace? By no means!" ([Romans 6:15](#)). Believers are called to live not according to the desires of the flesh but according to the Spirit. We are no longer slaves to sin but slaves to righteousness, with Christ as our Master. As Paul states in Romans 6:18, "And having been set free from sin, you became enslaved to righteousness" ([Romans 6:18](#)). With the Holy Spirit living in us, we are led in ways that are far beyond the legalistic laws of the Old Testament.

## Walking by the Spirit, Not by a Checklist

The New Testament consistently emphasizes that believers should walk according to the Spirit, not by adhering to a checklist of sins to avoid. The law of the Spirit is far more profound and personal than any list of rules. Paul writes in [Romans 8:14](#), "For all those led by God's Spirit are God's sons." The Spirit guides us in all aspects of life—our actions, thoughts, and decisions—in ways that transcend the old legalistic approach. As Paul instructs in [Galatians 5:16](#), "I say then, walk by the Spirit and you will certainly not carry out the desire of the flesh."

Our flesh alone cannot please God. Paul starkly contrasts the weakness of our flesh with the power of the Spirit in [Romans 8:8-9](#), saying, "Those who are in the flesh cannot please God. You, however, are not in the flesh but in the Spirit, if indeed the Spirit of God lives in you." Any action taken in our own strength, without the Holy Spirit's guidance, falls short of pleasing God. Only the Spirit within us can lead us to live in a way that honors Him. As believers, our good works stem from God's work in us, as Paul affirms in [Ephesians 2:10](#): "For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared ahead of time for us to do."

This is where Christianity fundamentally differs from other religions that emphasize ethics and morality. While other faiths may teach good values and encourage virtuous deeds from childhood, these works—though commendable—lack eternal value without Christ and the Holy Spirit. In fact, good works cannot save anyone apart from Christ. The Bible is clear: "For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared ahead of time for us to do." These good works result from salvation; they are not the means to it. We are saved by God's grace through faith in Jesus Christ alone, not by our works. Paul underscores this in [Ephesians 2:8-9](#), "For you are saved by grace through faith, and this is not from yourselves; it is God's gift—not from works, so that no one can boast."

## The Broad and Personal Law of the Spirit

The law of the Spirit goes beyond the written laws of the Old Testament, marking a new covenant between God and humanity established through Jesus Christ. This new covenant is not based on adherence to a list of rules, but on faith in Christ and the guidance of the Holy Spirit. As Paul writes, "For the law of the Spirit of life has set you free in Christ Jesus from the law of sin and death" ([Romans 8:2](#)).

This "law of the Spirit" is deeply personal and tailored to each believer's life, focusing on internal transformation rather than external compliance. It guides believers in applying God's principles to their daily lives, encompassing not just moral actions but the very direction of their lives. For instance, if the Holy Spirit guides someone to pursue a specific career or ministry, choosing a different path against this guidance would be a form of disobedience to God's specific leading.

The Christian life, therefore, is about living in constant communion with the Holy Spirit, who leads us into all truth ([John 16:13](#)). This dynamic relationship is summed up in Jesus' commandment: "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind... You shall love your neighbor as yourself" ([Matthew 22:37-39](#)). Love becomes the fulfillment of the law, as it inherently seeks to honor God and the well-being of others.

Ultimately, good works apart from Jesus amount to nothing in God's sight. As Jesus Himself said, "I am the vine; you are the branches. The one who remains in Me and I in him produces much fruit because you can do nothing without Me" ([John 15:5](#)). Our fruitfulness and righteousness stem from our connection to Christ, guided by the Spirit, rather than from adherence to a static list of rules.

## The Superiority of the Law of the Spirit

The law of the Spirit is superior to the Old Testament law because it addresses not just actions, but the heart's intentions. In the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus emphasizes that righteousness under the new covenant exceeds that of the scribes and Pharisees, who were meticulous in their observance of the law. Jesus teaches that it is not enough to refrain from murder; one must also avoid harboring anger in their heart ([Matthew 5:21-22](#)). It is not enough to avoid adultery; one must also not look at another with lust ([Matthew 5:27-28](#)). The law of the Spirit, therefore, requires a deeper, more personal commitment to God's righteousness.

Additionally, the law of the Spirit is dynamic and living, facilitated by the Holy Spirit who indwells every believer. The Spirit guides, convicts, and empowers believers to live according to God's will. As Paul explains, "If you are led by the Spirit, you are not under the law" ([Galatians 5:18](#)). This means that Christians are no longer bound by the letter of the Old Testament law but are called to a higher standard—a Spirit-led life marked by love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control ([Galatians 5:22-23](#)).

## Conclusion

In conclusion, God replaced the Old Testament law with the law of the Spirit in the New Testament to provide a more profound, comprehensive, and personal way for His people to relate to Him. The Old Testament law served its purpose by pointing out human sinfulness and the need for a savior. With the coming of Christ, believers are no longer under the old covenant but are called to live by the Spirit, a law that encompasses love for God and for others.

This shift from a list of rules to a guiding principle of love and Spirit-led living demonstrates God's desire for a relationship with His people that goes beyond mere external obedience to a heart fully devoted to Him. As the Apostle Paul declares, "For Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to everyone who believes" ([Romans 10:4](#)).

The law of the Spirit represents the fulfillment of the Old Testament law in Christ, inviting believers to live in the freedom and fullness of a Spirit-led life. This life transcends external observance and enters the realm of true spiritual transformation, where love for God and neighbor fulfills all that the law intended and more. As Christians, our goal is not merely to avoid sin but to walk in the Spirit, allowing Him to lead us in all things. This way of life goes beyond legalism and morality, emphasizing a deep, personal relationship with God through Christ. We are saved by grace through faith, and it is by this grace that we are empowered to live lives that glorify God. Let us, therefore, walk in the Spirit, producing the fruit of righteousness that comes through a life fully surrendered to Christ.

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